

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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1. Ticket prices on the railroads have increased 120% since the first of January this year. The rise in prices is aimed principally at a limiting of passenger traffic and particularly at the preventing of transport of food supplies from one part of the country to another. This measure has shown itself to be effective, and passenger traffic has for the present really diminished appreciably. It is considered, however, that this is a temporary phenomenon. The difference of prices in cities and in country localities on certain goods is very great. For example, a kilogram of butter in Warsaw costs 60 zloty, and in a village about 50 kilometers from Warsaw, 40 zloty. It is believed that it is only a question of time before speculators will again begin buying in the countryside and bringing produce into the cities. Naturally, the higher ticket prices will be included in the food prices, and an even greater increase in prices on the so-called free market in cities may therefore be expected.
2. Conditions on the Polish railways are on the point of taking a sharp change for the worse. It was possible to notice a big difference during the last quarter of 1952. Railroad personnel, particularly conductors, normally accept bribes and do not report money which they have received from passengers during a trip. Personnel have hitherto been in league with the railroad restaurants at the stations which have been a sort of trading center for produce smuggled by the conductors. Now all railway restaurants and food facilities have been taken over by the Communications Ministry. A new government enterprise for this has been organized, headed by Nowak (fnu), who was a minor official of the railways before the war.
3. The Polish railways did not fulfill the plan for 1952, as has been officially confirmed in a report from the State Commission for Economic Planning. It is reported that conditions on the Polish railroads are becoming strikingly similar to those on Soviet railroads. Frequent mistakes occur both in the handling of freight and passenger traffic. During 1952, the average speed of freight trains has diminished 3.8% in comparison with 1951. The freight transport plan was only fulfilled up to 89%, and the freight train traffic schedule was fulfilled only up to 82.1%.

25 YEAR
RE-REVIEW

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4. On 19 January 1953, the Minister for the Railroads, Strzalecki, sent out a circular which was read at a special meeting arranged by railway union men at all stations, work shops, and offices. In this circular, it was stated that one of the most important reasons for the railroads' inefficiency was the worsened punctuality in train traffic. This was particularly noticeable in the case of long-distance passenger trains, and the number of "late minutes" per train has appreciably increased during the past two years. Particularly evident was the worsening in July 1952, when the average lateness per train amounted to 29.3 minutes. In October, it was 39.1 minutes, and in November, it was 38.3 minutes, which means an increase in lateness of 34%. At the same time, the number of late trains increased by 3.1%. It was stated in the circular that no improvement in punctuality of traffic had occurred in January. The worst examples in this respect were the railway districts of Lublin, Krakow and Olsztyn (Allenstein). In the last named area, the average number of late minutes per train is 41. This situation sharply diminishes the transport effectiveness of the railways. Tracks are blocked, locomotives could not be made available at the prescribed times, which resulted in a shortage of locomotives. There resulted frequent arguments with train personnel, coal and grease consumption increased, etc. In the circular, it was stated that railway personnel no longer concern themselves with the condition of cars, technical faults are not reported, passenger cars are dirty and lack window panes, etc. The circular concluded with threats against railroad employees who neglect their duties, are disloyal, etc., and it predicted an increased control from the political apparatus within the Railway Ministry.
5. It is believed, however, that this "politruk apparatt", which was organized in May 1952 and given the assignment of encouraging railway personnel to increase their work effectiveness, bears a large portion of the guilt for what has happened to the railroads. This "politruk apparatt", which is called the Administration for Political Education in the Railway Ministry, is directed by two party activists, Puzon and his deputy Arabski. The administration has cells in all offices, stations, and railroad yards. The local politruks who had previously had this responsibility had placed great emphasis on political education and socialist work competition, and this had turned out unusually badly among the railway employees. Before the war, the Polish railroads were one of the best functioning branches in the state administration. The personnel were exceptional, and even today the older personnel form the backbone for the whole railway service. Instead of encouraging this section of the personnel which plays a decisive role in the handling of traffic, the politruks began to fight them as politically unreliable, intractable, and opposed to the politruks' work methods. Many of the best railway men were discharged or placed in less desirable positions. The old pre-war organization was completely revised. The general atmosphere among railway employees, even among the younger ones, borders on complete demoralization as far as work discipline goes, principally because of mistaken personnel policies and lowered wages. Most people think only of getting extra income for themselves by illegal methods. Railway men do not believe that anything can be improved with the present system. The obvious qualities for a railway man, industriousness, punctuality, and effectiveness, have ceased to be of any advantage to him.
6. Another reason for the disorder in traffic is the significant increase in Soviet transit shipments during the last year. Soviet transportation requirements are stated with very short advance warning and place a heavy burden on the transport department, which is blamed for the delay of any Russian train. Soviet trains must be held to their schedule under any circumstances without regard for Polish local traffic and always have priority over Polish trains.
7. As a third reason for the bad conditions now prevailing, there must be considered the progressive worsening of the railways' rolling stock. About 50% of the freight cars and 50% of the passenger cars on the Polish railways were built before 1915. Cars without defects are beginning to be among the exceptions. Repairs do little to improve their condition. It is impossible to put them into condition in the amount of time allotted for that purpose. Cars frequently come back after repairs in exactly the same condition as they were previously. A resigned atmosphere exists among the railway employees, who are responsible for repair work. They consider that there is nothing to be done about the situation as long as the present exploitation system is in effect. In spite of the fact that Poland is the biggest center for railroad cars in Eastern Europe, the Polish railways do not receive more than 5% of this production. The remainder is exported to the Soviet Union, China, and during recent times also to Bulgaria. Most of the railway men know this, and it does not improve their work.
8. Concerning conditions at the Opole (Oppeln) railway junction, one of the biggest freight stations in Upper Silesia, the following particulars have been learned: Through this station, there pass daily about 32 coal and coke trains as well as large trains of lumber from Lower Silesia to East Germany in the direction of Torzow (sic).

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Coal trains to East Germany go in the direction of Forst. Coal and lumber trains are closely guarded because well-organized and frequently armed gangs of thieves operate along the tracks and in the freight yards. These gangs have been unusually aggressive, especially in the winter and during the severe fuel shortage, and have even attacked trains in motion. Frequently, especially at night, there are regular battles between railway guards and the gangs of thieves, resulting in casualties on both sides.

9. Soviet trains to Legnica (Liegnitz) pass through the Opole station. Every day, four tank cars with gasoline for the airfield plus two cars with food and often with guns, tanks, and ammunition come to this station. Everything is carried on Soviet cars. In September, there passed through Opole 65 cars with Zis-111 automobiles, and every month, about 50 cars with cases containing parts for airplanes also pass this point. The locomotives of these trains are Polish, and the train guards are Soviet. Polish railway men and workers are forbidden to approach these trains. Only the station inspectors are authorized to check the seals on the cars. The documents concerning these shipments are kept in closed envelopes which may only be opened by Soviet personnel. The Soviet guards are friendly with the Poles, not permitting them to approach the train, but gladly doing business with them. They sell Soviet fountain pens, watches, small radios, etc. With the money thus obtained, they buy liquor.
10. At the Opole station, many other goods are discharged as, for example, wool from Holland, bicycles from East Germany, oranges from Italy, etc. All these import shipments are checked by a commission made up of seven persons. It has been noted, however, that oranges, for example, never appear on the market, and it is suspected that they are sold only to party favorites.
11. A station worker earns an average of 280 zloty, an official worker about 480 zloty, and everyone must steal in order to live. The commonest trick is for a locomotive to bump into a car so hard that it is damaged sufficiently for someone to get into the car without disturbing the seal. What and how much has been stolen can never be determined. The railway police and the UB, which make investigations, willingly accept bribes in the form of goods. Another method is to remove a pair of planks in the car's floor. There are also other often ingenious methods of stealing from the cars, and everything is tolerated if the cars are not Soviet. The best job is to be controller for shipments. The controller has the sealing machine. Practically speaking, he can open every car and take what he wants and then seal it up again. A railway employee pays up to 1000 zloty in bribes in order to get the controller's position for just one night. Everybody knows that the controller cooperates with the UB (Security Police), and the lion's share of the thefts go to the UB. The UB often checks cars which cannot be moved, and it sometimes happens that they arrest one or another group of workers who are employed in loading and similar tasks, but it has never happened that the UB has been able to collect sufficient evidence, and all the arrested men have been released after a few days.
12. Freight trains, at Opole, are very seldom on schedule. The trains from Upper Silesia are, on the average, two hours late, and trains from the north are four hours late, even in the case of Soviet trains. Loading and discharging of trains is never carried out in the prescribed time despite the refined piece-work system and work competitions from which only Stakhanovites of the first rank can derive any benefit.
13. In December, the party executive committee in the Railway Ministry began a new party control method of loading and discharging at large stations. The work brigades were sprinkled with party spies and informers. In practice, this results in every new worker being treated as a spy. His comrades in the brigade make life so miserable for him that he goes elsewhere as soon as possible. In January, it was already apparent that party control at the stations was completely ineffective.
14. Throughout the station area, railway police are posted. It is their assignment to guard bridges, viaducts, and station buildings and to protect all important shipments against thieves and also to check the loading and discharging at freight stations. In addition, the police control passenger traffic and are responsible for preventing the smuggling of goods, particularly food. The railway police are also responsible for maintaining order in the whole station area, and they have the authority to arrest all suspicious persons or those who are not behaving themselves.
15. The railway police are independent of the state police and militia. They are directly under the orders of the railway authorities. In Opole, there are 72 railway policemen who work in three shifts of 18 men (sic). A policeman on duty must call every half hour to the railway police officer on duty. The latter has four men in reserve. Guards who are posted at bridges, axle-changing stations, etc. are equipped with automatic pistols.

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Those who are on duty at the station itself have ordinary pistols. Railway police have the same uniform as other railway employees, with a white band around the arm bearing the inscription S.O.K. (Railway Police). They are under semi-military discipline. In most cases, they are young men between 24 and 30 years who have been trained in the Party or the ZMP (Union of Polish Youth). It is considered very desirable to be a railway policeman. Despite the fact that their wages are only 450 zloty per month, they have large incomes as a result of their participating, in various ways, in thefts. Another source of income for them is the arresting of smugglers who then bribe their way to freedom. The police sell stolen goods through their relatives and acquaintances. The railway police cooperate with the UB and all railway personnel at the station. They take severe action against all disturbers of the peace and also against all new persons among the gangs of thieves who have not come forward with sufficient bribes to be accepted as members of the gang. Most railway policemen call themselves good Communists and eagerly participate in party life. These conditions of corruption are known in the whole city, but no one speaks of it since there are very few persons who do not in one way or another benefit by this corruption.

16. During December, January, and February, there were observed in Opole freight cars from Czechoslovakia with electrical equipment for the Warsaw-Katowice line which is now being electrified.

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